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in the institution of arbitrary customs and traditions. It thus illustrates anew the general principle shown in the several previous steps of this progress, namely, the turning of an old power to a new account, or making a new use of it, when the power has acquired the requisite energy ; and the subsequent further increase of the power through serviceableness and exercise in its new function.

This power in the wills of the political, military, and religious leaders of men must soon, after producing the apotheosis of the more influential among them, have been converted into the sacred force of tradition ; that is, into the *fas* or commands of languages themselves, and of other arbitrary customs. Henceforth and throughout all the periods included in the researches of comparative philology in which written remains of languages are to be found, it is probable that no man has consciously committed, or had the power to commit, the sin of intentionally altering their traditions, except for reasons common to many speakers and afforded by the traditions themselves.

CHAUNCEY WRIGHT.

ART. III. — *Théâtre de Théophile Gautier : Mystères, Comédies, et Ballets.* Paris : Charpentier. 1872.

THERE recently died in Paris a man of genius whom his eulogists all made haste to proclaim a true poet. Many of them, indeed, spoke of Théophile Gautier as a great poet, and one, we remember, mentioned his last little volume, *Tableaux de Siège*, as the crowning glory of the resistance to the Prussians. Gautier was indeed a poet and a strongly representative one, — a French poet in his limitations even more than in his gifts ; and he remains an interesting example of how, even when the former are surprisingly great, a happy application of the latter may produce the most delightful works. Completeness, on his own scale, is to our mind the idea he most readily suggests. Such as his finished task now presents him, he is almost sole of his kind. He has had imitators who have imitated everything but his spontaneity and his temper ; and as they have

therefore failed to equal him, we doubt that the literature of our day presents so naturally perfect a genius. We say this with no desire to transfer Gautier to a higher pedestal than he has fairly earned,—a poor service; for the pedestal sometimes sadly dwarfs the figure. His great merit was that he understood himself so perfectly and handled himself so skilfully. Even more than Alfred de Musset (with whom the speech had a shade of mock-modesty), he might have said that, if his glass was not large, he could the easier raise it to his lips. As an artist, he never knew an hour's weakness nor failed to strike the note which should truly render his idea. He was, indeed, of literary artists the most accomplished. He was not of the Academy, but he completes not unworthily the picturesque group, gaining relief from isolation, of those eminent few — Molière, Pascal, Balzac, Béranger, George Sand — who have come near making it the supreme literary honor in France not to be numbered among the Forty. There are a host of reasons why we should not compare Gautier with such a poet as Browning, and yet several why we should. If we do, with all proper reservation, we may wonder whether we are the richer, or, at all events, the better entertained, as a poet's readers should, before all things, be, by the clear, undiluted strain of Gautier's minor key, or by the vast, grossly commingled volume of utterance of the author of "Men and Women." This, perhaps, is an idle question; and the artificer of *Émaux et Camées* was presumably of opinion that it is idle at all times to point a moral. But if there are sermons in stones, there are profitable reflections to be made even on Théophile Gautier; notably this one,—that a man's supreme use in the world is to master his intellectual instrument, and play it in perfection.

There is, perhaps, scant apparent logic in treating a closed career more tenderly than an open one; but we suspect it belongs to the finer essence of good criticism to do so, and, at any rate, we find our judgment of the author of the *Voyage en Espagne* and the *Capitaine Fracasse* turning altogether to unprotesting kindness. We had a vague consciousness of lurking objections; but on calling them to appear, they gave no answer. Gautier's death, indeed, in the nature of things could not but be touching, and dispose one to large allowances. The world he

left was the sum of the universe for him, and upon any other his writings throw but the dimmest light, — project, indeed, that contrasted darkness which surrounds the object of a luminous surface. The beauty and variety of our present earth and the insatiability of our earthly temperament were his theme, and we doubt that they have ever been placed in a more flattering light. He brought to his task a sort of pagan *bonhommie* which makes most of the descriptive and pictorial poets seem, by contrast, a group of shivering ascetics or muddled metaphysicians. He excels them by his magnificent good temper and the unquestioning serenity of his enjoyment of the great spectacle of nature and art. His style, certainly, is one of the latest fruits of time ; but his mental attitude before the universe has an almost Homeric simplicity. His world was all material, and its outlying darkness hardly more suggestive, morally, than a velvet canopy studded with silver nails. To close his eyes and turn his back on it must have seemed to him the end of all things ; death, for him, must have been as the sullen dropping of a stone into a well. His faculty of visual discrimination was extraordinary. His observation was so penetrating and his descriptive instinct so unerring, that one might have fancied grave Nature, in a fit of coquetry, or tired of receiving but half-justice, had determined to construct a genius with senses of a finer strain than the mass of the human family. Gautier, as an observer, often reminds us of those classic old *habitués* of the opera who listen with a subtler sense than their neighbors, and register with a murmured *brava* the undistinguishable shades of merit in a *prima donna's* execution. He was for many years a diligent theatrical critic, faithful to his post in all dramatic weathers, so that one has only to extend the image a little to conceive him as always in a *fauteuil d'orchestre* before the general stage, watching a lamplit performance, — flaring gas in one case, the influence of his radiant fancy in the other. “ Descriptive ” writing, to our English taste, suggests nothing very enticing, — a respectable sort of padding, at best, but a few degrees removed in ponderosity from downright moralizing. The prejudice, we admit, is a wholesome one, and the limits of verbal portraiture of all sorts should be jealously guarded. But there is no better proof of Gautier's talent than that he should have

triumphantly reformed this venerable abuse, and in the best sense, made one of the heaviest kinds of writing one of the lightest. Of his process and his success we could give an adequate idea only by a long series of citations, which we lack the opportunity to collect. The reader would conclude with us, we think, that Gautier is an inimitable model. He would never find himself condemned to that thankless task of pulling the cart up hill, — retouching the picture, — which is fatal to the charm of most descriptions. The author's manner is so light and true, so really creative, his fancy so alert, his taste so happy, his humor so genial that he makes illusion almost as contagious as laughter; the image, the object, the scene stand arrested by his phrase with the wholesome glow of truth overtaken. Gautier's native gift of expression was extremely rich, and he cultivated and polished it with a diligence which may serve to give the needed balance of gravity to his literary character. He enriched his picturesque vocabulary from the most recondite sources; we doubt if any was ever so comprehensive. His favorite reading, we have somewhere seen, was the dictionary; he loved words for themselves, — for their look, their aroma, their color, their fantastic intimations. He kept a supply of the choicest constantly at hand, and introduced them at effective points. In this respect he was a sort of immeasurably lighter-handed Rabelais, whom, indeed, he resembled in that sensuous exuberance of temperament which his countrymen are fond of calling peculiarly "Gaulois." He had an almost Rabelaisian relish for enumerations, lists, and catalogues, — a sort of grotesque delight in quantity. We need hardly remind the reader that these are not the tokens of a man of thought: Gautier was none. In the way of moral expression his phrase would have halted sadly; and when occasionally he emits a reflection, he is a very Philistine of Philistines. In his various records of travel, we remember, he never takes his seat in a railway train without making a neat little speech on the marvels of steam and the diffusion of civilization. If it were not in a Parisian *feuilleton*, it might proceed from Mr. Barlow, and be addressed to Harry Sandford and Tommy Merton. These genial commonplaces are Gautier's only tributes to philosophy. It seems as absurd to us as that very puerile performance itself

that the philosophic pretensions of the famous preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* should have provoked any other retort than a laugh. Gautier was incapable of looking, for an appreciable duration of time, at any other than the superficial, the picturesque face of a question. If you find him glancing closer, you may be sure, with all respect, that the phenomenon will last just as long as a terrier will stand on his hind-legs.

To raise on such a basis so large a structure was possible only to a Frenchman, and to a Frenchman inordinately endowed with the national sense of form and relish for artistic statement. Gautier's structure is composed of many pieces. He began, in his early youth, with *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. It has seemed to us rather a painful exhibition of the prurience of the human mind, that, in most of the recent notices of the author's death (those, at least, published in England and America), this work alone should have been selected as the critic's text. It is Gautier's one disagreeable performance: how it came to be written it is of small profit at this time to inquire. In certain lights the book is almost ludicrously innocent, and we are at a loss what to think of those critics who either hailed or denounced it as a serious profession of faith. With faith of any sort Gautier strikes us as slenderly furnished. Even his æsthetic principles are held with a good-humored laxity which allows him, for instance, to say in a hundred places the most delightfully sympathetic and pictorial things about the romantic or Shakespearian drama, and yet to describe a pedantically classical revival of the *Antigone* at Munich with the most ungrudging relish. The only very distinct statement of intellectual belief that we remember in his pages is the singularly perfect little poem which closes the collection of chiselled and polished verses called *Émaux et Camées*. It is a charming example of Gautier at his best, and we shall be pardoned for quoting it.

"L'ART.

" Oui, l'œuvre sort plus belle
D'une forme au travail
Rebelle,
Vers, marbre, onyx, émail.

Point de contraintes fausses !
Mais que pour marcher droit
Tu chausses,
Muse, un cothurne étroit.

Fi du rythme commode,
Comme un soulier trop grand,
Du mode
Que tout pied quitte et prend !

Statuaire, repousse
L'argile que pétrit
Le pouce,
Quand flotte ailleurs l'esprit ;

Lutte avec le carrare,
Avec le paros dur
Et rare,
Gardiens du contour pur ;

Emprunte à Syracuse
Son bronze où fermement
S'accuse
Le trait fier et charmant ;

D'une main délicate
Poursuis dans un filon
D'agate
Le profil d'Apollon.

Peintre, fuis l'aquarelle,
Et fixe la couleur
Trop frêle
Au four de l'émailleur ;

Fais les sirènes bleues,
Tordant de cent façons
Leurs queues,
Les monstres des blasons ;

Dans son nimbe trilobe
La Vierge et son Jésus,
Le globe
Avec la croix dessus.

Tout passe. — L'art robuste
Seul a l'éternité.
Le buste
Survit à la cité.

Et la médaille austère
Que trouve un laboureur
Sous terre
Révèle un empereur.

Les dieux eux-mêmes meurent,
Mais les vers souverains
Demeurent
Plus forts que les airains.

Sculpte, lime, cisèle ;
Que ton rêve flottant
Se scelle
Dans le bloc résistant !

These admirable verses seem to us to be almost tinged with intellectual passion. It is a case of an æsthetic, an almost technical, conviction, glowing with a kind of moral fervor. They vividly reflect, in our opinion, the great simplicity of the author's mind. We doubt whether life often addressed him a more puzzling question than the one he has so gracefully answered here. He had, of course, his likes and dislikes ; and, as the poet of the luxuries of life, he naturally preferred those paternal governments which pay heavy subventions to opera-houses, order palace-frescos by the half-mile, and maintain various picturesque sinecures. He was sensuously a conservative ; although, after all, as an observer and describer, he was the frankest of democrats. He had a glance for everything, and a phrase for everything on the broad earth, and all that he asked of an object, as a source of inspiration, was that it should have length, breadth, and color. Much of Gautier's poetry is of the same period as *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, and some of it of the same quality ; notably the frantically picturesque legend of *Albertus*, written in the author's twenty-first year, and full of the germs of his later flexibility of diction. *Emaux et Camées*, the second volume of his collected verses, contains, evidently, his poetic bequest. In this chosen series every poem is a masterpiece ; it has received the author's latest and fondest care ; all, as the title indicates, is goldsmiths' work. In Gautier's estimation, evidently, these exquisite little pieces are the finest distillation of his talent ; not one of them but ought to have outweighed a dozen Academic blackballs. Gautier's best verse is neither

sentimental, satirical, narrative, nor even lyrical. It is always pictorial and plastic, — a matter of images, “effects,” and color. Even when the motive is an idea, — of course, a slender one, — the image absorbs and swallows it, and the poem becomes a piece of rhythmic imitation. What is this delightful little sonnet — the *Pot de Fleurs* — but a piece of self-amused imagery?

“Parfois un enfant trouve une petite graine,
Et tout d’abord, charmé de ses vives couleurs,
Pour la planter, il prend un pot de porcelaine
Orné de dragons bleus et de bizarres fleurs.

“Il s’en va. La racine en couleuvres s’allonge,
Sort de terre, fleurit et devient arbrisseau;
Chaque jour, plus avant, son pied chevelu plonge
Tant qu’il fasse éclater le ventre du vaisseau.

“L’enfant revient; surpris, il voit la plante grasse
Sur les débris du pot brandir ses verts poignards;
Il la veut arracher, mais la tige est tenace;
Il s’obstine, et ses doigts s’ensanglantent aux dards.

“Ainsi germa l’amour dans mon âme surprise;
Je croyais ne semer qu’une fleur de printemps:
C’est un grand aloès dont la racine brise
Le pot de porcelaine aux dessins éclatants.”

We may almost fancy that the whole sonnet was written for the sake of the charming line we have marked, — a bit of Keats Gallicized. Gautier’s first and richest poetry, however, is to be found in his prose, — the precious, artistic prose which for forty years he lavished in newspaper *feuilletons* and light periodicals. Here the vivid, plastic image is his natural, constant formula; he scatters pictures as a fine singer *roulades*; every paragraph is the germ of a sonnet, every sentence a vignette. “It is pure *Lacrima-Christi*,” as Sainte-Beuve says, “*qu’on vous verse au coin d’une borne*.” The twenty-five volumes or so into which this long daily labor has been gathered — *feuilletons* and sketches, novels and tales, records of travel, reports of “damned” plays and unsold pictures — form a vast treasury of literary illustration. When Gautier, according to present promise, begins to be remembered mainly as the author of an indecent novel

whose title is circulated in the interest of virtue, needy poets may deck their wares for the market with unmissed flowers of description from his blooming plantations. He has commemorated every phase and mood and attribute of nature, and every achievement and possibility of art; and you have only to turn his pages long enough to find the perfect presentment of your own comparatively dim and unshaped vision.

Early in life he began to travel, — to travel far for a Frenchman, — and, of course, to publish his impressions. They relate altogether to the *look* of the countries he visited, — to landscape, art-collections, street-scenery, and costume. On the “institutions” of foreign lands he is altogether silent. His delightful vividness on his chosen points is elsewhere unapproached, and his *Voyage en Espagne*, his *Constantinople*, his *Italia*, and his *Voyage en Russie* seem to us his most substantial literary titles. No other compositions of the same kind begin to give one, in one’s chair, under the lamp, the same sense of standing under new skies, among strange scenes. With Gautier’s readers the imagination travels in earnest, and makes journeys more profitable, in some respects, than those we really undertake. He has the broad-eyed, universal, almost *naïf* gaze at things of a rustic at a fair, and yet he discriminates them with a shrewdness peculiarly his own. We renew, over his pages, those happiest hours of youth, when we have strolled forth into a foreign town, still sprinkled with the dust of travel, and lost ourselves deliciously in the fathomless sense of local differences and mystery. Gautier had a passion for material detail, and he vivifies, illuminates, and interprets it, woos it into relief, resolves it into pictures with a joyous ingenuity which makes him the prince of *ciceroni*. His *Voyage en Espagne* is, in this respect, a masterpiece and model. It glows, from beginning to end, with an overcharged verisimilitude in which we seem to behold some intenser essence of Spain, — of her light and color and climate, her expression and personality. All this borrows a crowning vivacity from the author’s genial unpretentiousness, his almost vainglorious triviality. A “high standard” is an excellent thing: but we sometimes fancy it takes away more than it gives, and that an untamed natural faculty of enjoying at a venture is a better

conductor of æsthetic light and heat. Gautier's superbly appreciative temperament makes him, at the least, as solid an observer as the representative German doctor in spectacles, bristling with critical premises. It is signally suggestive to compare his lusty tribute to San Moïse at Venice, in his *Italia*, with Ruskin's stern dismissal of it in his *Stones of Venice*,—Ruskin so painfully unable to see the "joke" of it, and Gautier, possibly, so unable to see anything but the joke. We may, in strictness, agree with Ruskin, but we envy Gautier. It was to be expected of such a genius that he should enjoy the East; and Gautier professed a peculiar devotion to it. He was fond of pretending that he was a real Oriental, come astray into our Western world. He has described Eastern scenery and manners, Eastern effects of all kinds, with incomparable *gusto*; and, on reading the *libretti* to the three or four *ballets* included in the volume whose title precedes our notice, we wonder whether his natural attitude was not to recline in the perfumed dusk of a Turkish divan, puffing a *chibouque*, and forecasting the successive episodes of a Mohammedan immortality. This pretension, however, did him injustice: and such a book as the *Voyage en Russie*; such chapters as his various notes on the Low Countries, their landscape and their painters; such a sketch, indeed, as his wonderful *humoristique* history of a week in London, in his *Caprices et Zigzags*,—prove abundantly that he had more than one string to his bow. He shot equally far with the others. Each of his chapters of travel has a perfect tone of its own, and that unity of effect which is the secret of the rarest artists. The *Voyage en Espagne* is a masterly mixture of hot lights and warm shadows; the *Constantinople* is an immense verbal Decamps, as one may say; and the *Voyage en Russie*, compounded of effects taken from the opposite end of the scale, is illumined with the cold blue light of the North. Gautier's volumes abound in records of the most unadventurous excursions,—light sketches of a feuilletonist's holidays. His fancy found its account in the commonest things as well as the rarest,—in Callot as well as in Paul Veronese,—and these immediate notes are admirable in their multicolored reflections of the perpetual entertainment of Nature. Gautier found Nature supremely entertaining; this

seems to us the shortest description of him. She had no barren places for him, for he rendered her poverty with a *brio* which made it as picturesque as her wealth. He professed always to care for nothing but beauty. "*Fortunio*," he says, in the preface to this grotesquely meretricious production, "is a hymn to Beauty, Wealth, and Happiness, — the only three divinities we recognize. It celebrates gold, marble, and purple." But, in fact, he was too curious an artist not to enjoy ugliness very nearly as much, and he drew some of his most striking effects from it. We recommend to the reader the account of a stroll among the slaughter-houses and the asylums of lost dogs and cats in the Paris *banlieue*, in the *Caprices et Zigzags*; his elaborate pictures, several times repeated, of Spanish bull-fights (which show to what lengths *l'art pour l'art* can carry the kindest tempered of men), and a dozen painful passages in his *Tableaux de Siége*. This little volume, the author's last, is a culminating example of his skill. It is a common saying with light *littérateurs*, that, to describe a thing, you must not know it too well. Gautier knew Paris — picturesque Paris — with a forty years' knowledge; yet he has here achieved the remarkable feat of suppressing the sense of familiarity, and winning back, for the sake of inspiration, a certain freshness of impression. The book was written in evil days; but nothing from Gautier's hand is pleasanter; and the silvery strain of his beautiful rhetoric, after so long a season of thunderous bulletins and proclamations, suggests the high, clear note of some venerable nightingale after a summer storm. Deprived of his customary occupation, he became a forced observer of those obvious things which vision commonly overlooks, and discovered that they, too, had their poetry, and that, if you only look at it closely, everything is remunerative. He found poetry in the poor, rawboned lions and tigers of the Jardin des Plantes; in the hungry dogs in the street, hungrily-eyed; in a trip on the circular railway, and on the penny steamers on the Seine; in that delicacy of vanished seasons, a pat of fresh butter in Chevet's window. Beneath his touch these phenomena acquire the finely detailed relief of the accessories and distances in a print of Albert Dürer's: we remember no better example of the magic of style. But the happiest performance in the book

is a series of chapters on Versailles, when the whirligig of time had again made its splendid vacancy an active spot in the world's consciousness. No one should go there now without Gautier's volume in his pocket; he has rendered the prodigious expression of park and palace with the broadest strokes. It was Gautier's good fortune that his autumn was as sound as his summer, and his last writing second to none before it. The current of diction in this last volume is as full and clear as in the *Voyage en Espagne*.

Gautier's stories and novels belong, for the most part, to his prime; he reached his climax as a story-teller ten years ago, with *Le Capitaine Fracasse*. His productions in this line are not numerous, for dramatic invention with him was evidently not abundant. As was to be supposed, the human interest in his tales is inferior to the picturesque. They remind us of those small cabinet paintings of the contemporary French school, replete with archæological details as to costume and furniture, which hang under glass in immense gilt frames, and form the delight of connoisseurs. Gautier's figures are altogether pictorial; he cared for nothing, and knew nothing in men and women but the epidermis. With this, indeed, he was marvellously acquainted, and he organized in its service a phraseology as puzzlingly various as the array of pots and brushes of a *coiffeur*. His attitude towards the human creature is, in a sublimated degree, that of a barber or tailor. He anoints and arranges and dresses it to perfection; but he deals only in stuffs and colors. His fable is often pretty enough; but one imagines it always written in what is called a studio light,—on the corner of a table littered with brushes and frippery. The young woman before the easel, engaged at forty sous a sitting to take off her dress and let down her hair, is obviously the model for the heroine. His stories are always the measure of an intellectual need to express an ideal of the exquisite in personal beauty and in costume, combined with that of a certain serene and full-blown sensuality in conduct, and accompanied with gorgeous visions of upholstery and architecture. Nothing classifies Gautier better, both as to the individual and the national quality of his genius, than the perfect frankness of his treatment of the

human body. We of English speech pass (with the French) for prudish on this point; and certain it is that there is a limit to the freedom with which one can comfortably discourse of hair and skin, and teeth and nails, even to praise them. The French, on the other hand, discuss this physical texture as complacently as we discuss that of our trousers and boots. The Parisians profess, we believe, to have certain tendencies in common with the old Athenians; this unshrinking contemplation of our physical surfaces might be claimed as one of them. Practically, however, it gives one a very different impression from the large Greek taste for personal beauty; for the French type, being as meagre as the Greek was ample, has been filled out with the idea of "grace," which, by implying that the subject is conscious, makes modesty immediately desirable and the absence of it vicious. Gautier, in this respect, is the most eloquent of our modern Athenians, and pays scantiest tribute to our English scruples and blushes. Flesh and blood, noses and bosoms, arms and legs were a delight to him, and it was his mission to expatiate on them. For any one who has glanced at the dusky background of Parisian life, with its sallow tones and close odors, among which no Athenian sky makes a blue *repoussoir* either for statues or mortals, there is something almost touchingly heroic in Gautier's fixed conception of sublime good looks. He invents unprecedented attributes, and it is nothing to say of his people that they are too good to live. In *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre*, the hero, inflamed with a hopeless passion for the Egyptian queen, has been pursuing her barge in a little skiff, and rowing so fast, under an Egyptian sun, that he has overtaken her fifty oarsmen. "He was a beautiful young man of twenty, with hair so black that it seemed blue, a skin blond as gold, and proportions so perfect that he might have been taken for a bronze of Lysippus. Although he had been rowing some time, he betrayed no fatigue, and *had not on his brow a single drop of sweat.*" Gautier's heroines are always endowed with transparent finger-tips. These, however, are his idler touches. His real imaginative power is shown in his masterly evocation of localities, and in the thick-coming fancies which minister to his inexhaustible conception of that pictorial "setting" of human life which

interested him so much more than human life itself. In the *Capitaine Fracasse*, the *Roman de la Momie*, *Le Roi Candaule*, *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre*, and *Aria Marcella* he revels in his passion for scenic properties and backgrounds. His science, in so far as it is archæological, is occasionally at fault, we suspect, and his facts slightly fantastic ; but it all sounds very fine, and his admirable pictorial instinct makes everything pass. He reconstructs the fabulous splendors of old Egypt with a magnificent audacity of detail, and rivals John Martin, of *mezzotinto* fame, in the energy with which he depicts the light of torches washing the black basalt of palace-stairs. If the portrait is here and there inaccurate, so much the worse for the original. The works we have just mentioned proceed altogether by pictures. No reader of the *Roman de la Momie* will have forgotten the portentous image of the great Pharaoh, who sits, like a soulless idol, upon his palace-roof, and watches his messengers swim across the Nile and come and lie on their faces (some of them dying) at his feet. Such a picture as the following, from *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre*, may be rather irresponsible archæology, but it is admirable imagery : —

“ Le spectacle changeait à chaque instant ; tantôt c'était de gigantesques propylées qui venaient mirer au fleuve leurs murailles en talus, plaquées de larges panneaux de figures bizarres ; des pylônes aux chapiteaux évasés, des rampes côtoyées de grands sphinx accroupis, coiffés du bonnet à barbe cannelée, et croisant sous leurs mamelles aiguës leurs pattes de basalte noir ; des palais démesurés, faisant saillir sur l'horizon les lignes horizontales et sévères de leur entablement, où le globe emblématique ouvrait les ailes mystérieuses comme un aigle à l'envergure démesurée ; des temples aux colonnes énormes, grosses comme des tours, où se détachait sur un fond d'éclatante blancheur des processions des figures hieroglyphiques ; toutes les prodigiosités de cette architecture de Titans ; tantôt des passages d'une aridité désolante ; des collines formées par des petits éclats de pierre provenant des fouilles et des constructions, miettes de cette gigantesque débauche de granit qui dura plus de trente siècles ; des montagnes exfoliées de chaleur, déchiquetées et zébrées de rayures noires, semblables aux cautérisations d'une incendie ; des tertres bossus et difformes, accroupis comme le creocéphale des tombeaux, et découpant au bord du ciel leur attitude contrefaite ; des marnes verdâtres, des ochres roux, des tufs d'un blanc farineux, et, de temps à autre, quelque escarpement de marbre couleur rose-sèche, où bâillaient les bouches noires des carrières.”

If, as an illustration, we could transfuse the essence of one of Gautier's best performances into this colorless report, we should choose the *Capitaine Fracasse*. In this delightful work Gautier surpassed himself, and produced the model of picturesque romances. The story was published, we believe, some twenty-five years after it was announced, — and announced because the author had taken a fancy to the title and proposed to write “up” to it. We cannot say how much of the long interval was occupied with this endeavor; but certainly the *Capitaine Fracasse* is as good as if a quarter of a century had been given to it. Besides being his most ambitious work, it bears more marks of leisure and meditation than its companions. Meissonier might have written it, if, with the same talent and a good deal more geniality, he had chosen to use the pen rather than the brush. The subject is just such a one as Gautier was born to appreciate, — a subject of which the expression resides in pictures almost as much as that of “Don Quixote.” It is borrowed, indeed, but as great talents borrow, — for a use which brings the original into fashion again, when the case is possible. Scarron's *Roman Comique*, which furnished Gautier with his starting-point, is as barren to the eye as Gil Blas itself, besides being a much coarser piece of humor. The sort of memory one retains of the *Capitaine Fracasse* is hard to express, save by some almost physical analogy. We remember the perusal of most good novels as an intellectual pleasure, — a pleasure which varies in degree, but is, as far as it goes, an affair of the mind. The hours spent over the *Capitaine Fracasse* seem to have been an affair of the senses, of personal experience, of observation and contact, as illusory as those of a peculiarly arid dream. The novel presents the adventures of a company of strolling players of Louis XIII.'s time, — their vicissitudes collective and individual, their miseries and gayeties, their loves and squabbles, and their final apportionment of worldly comfort, — very much in that symmetrical fashion in which they have so often stood forth to receive it at the fall of the curtain. It is a fairy-tale of Bohemia, a triumph of the *picaresque*. In this case, by a special extension of his power, the author has made the dramatic interest as lively as the pictorial, and lodged good human hearts beneath the wonderfully-painted, rusty doublets

and tarnished satins of his maskers. The great charm of the book is its sort of combined geniality of feeling and coloring, which leaves one in doubt whether the author is the most joyous of painters or the cleverest of poets. It is a masterpiece of good-humor, — a good-humor sustained by the artist's indefatigable relish for his theme. In artistic "bits," of course, the book abounds; it is a delightful gallery of portraits. The models, with their paint and pomatum, their broken plumes and threadbare velvet, their false finery and their real hunger, their playhouse manners and morals are certainly not very choice company; but the author handles them with an affectionate, sympathetic jocosity of which we so speedily feel the influence that, long before we have finished, we seem to have drunk with them one and all out of the playhouse goblet, to the confusion of respectability and life before the scenes. If we incline to look for deeper meaning, we can fancy the work in the last analysis an expression of that brotherly sympathy with the social position of the comedian which Gautier was too much what the French call an *homme de théâtre* not to entertain as an almost poetic sentiment. The *Capitaine Fracasse*, however, is one of those works so thickly overcrowded by its merits that definition and discrimination are not only difficult but rude. And beyond and above its definable merits, its cunningly wrought figures and richly shadowed scenes, it has that large, inexpressible charm which belongs only to rare masterpieces. It ranks, in our opinion, with the greatest works of imagination produced in our day.

Of Gautier as a critic there is not much to say that we have not said of him as a traveller and story-teller. Rigid critic he was none; it was not in his nature to bring himself to fix a standard. The things he liked he spoke well of; of the things he disliked, a little less well. His brother critics, who would have preferred to count on him to substantiate their severities, found him unpardonably "genial." We imagine that, in the long run, he held a course nearer the truth than theirs, and did better service. His irresistible need for the positive in art, for something describable, — phrasable, as we may say, — often led him to fancy merit where it was not, but more often, probably, to detect it where it lurked. He was a constructive com-

mentator ; and if the work taken as his text is often below his praise, the latter, with its magical grasp of the idea, may serve as a sort of generous lesson. His work as a critic is most abundant, and has been but partially collected. For many years he reported elaborately on the annual *Salon* and produced a weekly review of the theatre. His accounts of the *Salon*, which have yet to be republished, form, probably, the best history — if also the least didactic — of modern French art. When pictures and statues have passed out of sight, it is rather meagre entertainment to peruse amendments to their middle distance and to the finer points in their anatomy. Gautier's pages preserve what was best in them, — the attempt, the image, the vision. His *critiques* illustrate more pointedly, perhaps, than his poems and tales, his native incapacity to moralize. Occasionally, we think, a promising subject comes near being sacrificed to it. We were lately struck, in reading the delightful *Correspondance* of Henri Regnault, whose herald-in-chief Gautier constituted himself, with the latter's fatally shallow conception of the duties of an æsthetic guide, philosopher, and friend. Gautier, possibly, claimed no such office ; but, at any rate, he spoke with authority ; and the splendid, unmeasured flattery which he pours out on the young painter gives us something of the discomfort with which we should see an old man plying a young lad with strong wine. Regnault, fortunately, had a strong head ; but the attitude, in Gautier, is none the less immoral. He repaints the young man's pictures, verbally, with almost superior power, and repeats and consecrates their more ominous eccentricities in his glowing rhetoric. To assure a youth of genius, by sound of trumpet, that his genius is infallible, is, doubtless, good *camaraderie*, but, from a high point of view, it is poor æsthetics.

The first half of Gautier's theatrical *feuilletons* have been gathered into six volumes, under the ambitious title — a device, evidently, of the publishers rather than the author — of *L'Histoire de l'Art Dramatique en France*. In the theatre, as at the *Salon*, he is the most good-natured of critics, and enjoys far less picking a feeble drama to pieces than sketching fine scenery and good acting. The book, however, is an excellent one ; its

tone is so easy, its judgments so happy and unpedantic, its good taste so pervasive, its spirit so wholesomely artistic. But we confess that what has most struck us, in turning it over, has been the active part played by the stage in France during these forty years, its incalculable fertility, and its insatiable absorption of talent and ingenuity. Buried authors and actors are packed away in Gautier's pages as on the shelves of an immense mausoleum; and if, here and there, they exhibit the decorative touch of the embalmer, the spectacle is, on the whole, little less lugubrious. It takes away one's breath to think of the vast consumption of witticisms involved in the development of civilization. Gautier's volumes seem an enormous monument to the shadowy swarm of jokes extinct and plots defunct, — dim-featured ghosts, still haunting the lawless circumference of literature, in pious confidence that the transmigration of souls will introduce them to the foot-lights again. Gautier's dealings with the theatre were altogether those of a spectator; for the little comedies collected in the volume which forms the text of our remarks are not of the sort approved by managers. They are matters of color, not of structure, and masterpieces of style rather than of "effect." The best of them, the *Tricorne Enchanté*, *Bastonnade en un Acte et en Vers*, *Mêlée d'un Couplet*, has been represented since the author's death, but, we believe, with only partial success. The piece is a *pastiche*, suggested by various sources, — Molière, Goldoni, the old prints of the types of the conventional Italian farce. The style is a marvel of humorous ingenuity, and exhales a delightful aroma of the grotesque stage-world of jealous guardians and light-fingered valets, saucy waiting-maids and modest *ingénues*. The verse occasionally emulates Molière with the happiest vivacity. Géronte, having lost his valet, determines to serve himself.

" Quel est donc le fossé, quelle est donc la muraille
Où gît, cuvant son vin, cette brave canaille ?
O Champagne ! es-tu mort ? As-tu pris pour cercueil
Un tonneau défoncé de brie ou d'argenteuil ?
Modèle des valets, perle des domestiques,
Qui passais en vertu les esclaves antiques,
Que le ciel avait fait uniquement pour moi, —
Par qui te remplacer, comment vivre sans toi ?

— Parbleu ! Si j'essayais de me servir moi-même ?
 Ce serait la façon de trancher le problème.
 Je me commanderais et je m'obéirais.
 Je m'aurais sous la main, et quand je me voudrais,
 Je n'aurais pas besoin de me pendre aux sonnettes.
 Nul ne sait mieux que moi que j'ai des mœurs honnêtes,
 Que je me suis toujours conduit loyalement.
 Ainsi donc je m'accepte avec empressement.
 Ah, Messieurs les blondins, si celui-là me trompe,
 Vous le pourrez aller crier à son de trompe :
 J'empocherai votre or, et me le remettrai :
 Vos billets pleins de musc, c'est moi qui les lirai.
 D'ailleurs, je prends demain, qu'on me loue ou me blâme,
 Mademoiselle Inez, ma pupille, pour femme.
 Elle me soignera dans mes quintes de toux,
 Et près d'elle couché, je me rirai de vous,
 Les Amadis transis, les coureurs de fortune,
 Gelant sous le balcon par un beau clair de lune !
 Et, quand j'apercevrai mon coquin de neveu,
 De deux ou trois seaux d'eau j'arroserai son feu ! ”

The little piece called *Une Larme du Diable*, to which the author has affixed the half-apologetic qualification of *Mystère*, is one of his cleverest and most characteristic performances. None illustrates better, perhaps, what we have called the simplicity of his mind,—the way in which he conceived the most exalted ideas as picturesque, and picturesque only. *Une Larme du Diable* is a light *pastiche* of a mediæval miracle-play, just as the *Tricorne Enchanté* is an imitation of a seventeenth-century farce. The scene is alternately in heaven and on earth. *Satanas* is the hero, and *le Bon Dieu* and *Christus*, grotesquely associated with Othello and Desdemona, are among the minor characters. *Christus* himself, conversing in heaven, manifests a taste for the picturesque. “*Ce matin je me suis déguisé en mendiant, je leur* (the two heroines) *ai demandé l'aumône ; elles ont déposé dans ma main lépreuse, chacune à leur tour, une grosse pièce de cuivre, toute glacée de vert-de-gris.*” These copper coins, glazed with verdigris, are a sort of symbol of the drama,—a drama in which the celestial mind has a turn for *bric-à-brac*. Shrewdly fantastic as is the whole composition, it is a capital example of the weakness of an imagination dependent wholly upon the senses. That Gautier's fancy should have prompted him to write *Une Larme du Diable*, is up to a

certain point to its credit; that it should have carried him through the task suggests unutterable things as to his profundity. He had evidently no associations with divine images which it cost him a moment's hesitation to violate; and one may say of him that he was incapable of blasphemy, because he was incapable of respect. He is compounded of consistent levity. These are strange things to find one's self saying of a poet, and they bring us back to our first remark,—that our author's really splendid development is inexorably circumscribed. Infinite are the combinations of our faculties. Some of us are awkward writers and yearning moralists; others are masters of a perfect style which has never reflected a spiritual spark. Gautier's disposition served him to the end, and enabled him to have a literary heritage perfect of its kind. He could look every day at a group of beggars sunning themselves on the Spanish Steps at Rome, against their golden wall of mouldering travertine, and see nothing but the fine brownness of their rags and their flesh-tints,—see it and enjoy it forever, without an hour's disenchantment, without a chance of one of those irresistible revulsions of mood in which the “mel-lowest” rags are but filth, and filth is poverty, and poverty a haunting shadow, and picturesque squalor a mockery. His unfaltering robustness of vision—of appetite, one may say—made him not only strong but enviable.

HENRY JAMES JR.

ART. IV.—THE INDIAN QUESTION.

ON the 30th of March, 1871, Congress declared that “hereafter no Indian nation or tribe within the territory of the United States shall be acknowledged or recognized as an independent nation, tribe, or power, with whom the United States may contract by treaty.”

Brave words these would have seemed to good William Penn, treating with the Lenni Lenape, under the spreading elm at Kensington; or even to doughty Miles Standish, ready as that worthy ever was to march against the heathen who troubled